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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSK #0648 1701006
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 191006Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY MINSK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4574
INFO RUEHKKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0001
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0025
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS MINSK 000648

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [ETRD](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: Sudan and Belarus Sign Military Pact, Minsk Stays Silent

Ref: Minsk081124Z JUN 06 IIR 6 937 0054 06

11. (U) On June 16, on-line Sudanese newspaper the Sudan Tribune announced that Sudanese Defense Minister General Abdelrahim Mohamed Hussein signed a military cooperation protocol with his Belarusian counterpart Leonid Maltsev on June 15 in Minsk. The article claimed Hussein was in Belarus June 13 to 15 for talks with the Belarusian Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. The military cooperation protocol reportedly covers "training, exchange of experiences, and military science fields." The paper claimed the Belarusian side hoped to boost its exports to Sudan, especially of tractors, and to play a role in developing Sudanese oil fields.

12. (SBU) The Belarusian government made no announcements of any cooperation protocol. No GOB body, including the MFA, MOD, or state news agency BelTA, even mentioned that a Sudanese delegation was in Minsk. [Note: Poloff by chance directly observed Defense Minister Maltsev entertaining the Sudanese delegation at a Minsk restaurant. Maltsev was accompanied by a senior military officer, and, according to the license plates on the vehicles, officials from the BKGB.]

13. (U) The Sudan Tribune article also stated that Belarus has exported weapons to Sudan since 1996, and provided the following list of arms sold:

1996: nine T-55 tanks;
1997: six Mi-24B attack helicopters;
2003: nine BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles, 39 BRDM-2 armored reconnaissance vehicles, 16 D-30 howitzer guns, 10 Gvoddzika self-propelled howitzers, six Grad multiple rocket launchers;
2004: 21 BRDM-2 armored reconnaissance vehicles, seven BTR-70 armored personnel carriers, one BMP-1 infantry fighting vehicle.

14. (SBU) Comment: Post believes that such a deal was signed. The GOB has long sought to increase cooperation among the world's outcast nations, to counter pressure from both the West and now from Russia. The Belarusian Foreign Minister visited Khartoum in early February, where he signed a number of agreements on scientific, agricultural, and commercial cooperation. Minsk has also been actively building ties with Iran, Syria, Cuba, and North Korea (which has a delegation coming to Minsk June 26 to 30). Belarus is possibly keeping this new agreement quiet, given the UNSC sanctions on Sudan. Normally the GOB trumpets such agreements as further "evidence" Belarus is not internationally isolated. Post also has reason to believe Minsk is still supplying military equipment to Khartoum (reftel).

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